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TAGS: IR PHUM PREL
SUBJECT: BRAZIL: DEMARCHE RESPONSE ON IRAN UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW SESSION

REF: 10 STATE 7242; BRASILIA 9

CLASSIFIED BY: Lisa Kubiske, Charge d'Affaires; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶11. (C) The Human Rights Department at the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MRE) responded favorably to the approach outlined in ref tel A of using Iran's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the Human Rights Council (HRC) to pressure Iran on its human rights performance. MRE Department Deputy Director Nathanael Souza told Poloff that Brazil supports using the forum to urge Iran to fulfill UN commitments, including the need to finalize the visits from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur for Torture. He described the HRC as a place in which countries could "be more honest," asking tough questions without feeling the pressure to vote on specific resolutions.

¶12. (C) Souza asked if we planned to press Iran in the UPR on repression of the Baha'i. Poloff encouraged Brazil to question Iran about the Baha'i during the forum, emphasizing U.S. support but also suggesting that Brazil could be out in front on the specific issue of advocating for the Baha'i. Souza told us that President Lula's Worker's Party (PT) has been and will continue pushing MRE to raise treatment of the Baha'i with Iran because several PT politicians and high-ranking party members are Baha'i converts. Earlier this month, MRE Undersecretary for Political Affairs Vera Machado met with the Iranian Ambassador in Brazil to press him on the Baha'i and received a less-than-satisfactory answer (see ref B).

¶13. (C) MRE Undersecretary Machado is scheduled to be in Geneva during the dates mentioned in ref A for NEA Deputy Assistant Secretary Limbert's visit. Souza expressed interest in scheduling a meeting in Geneva between senior U.S. and Brazilian officials working on Iran-related issues, but was not in a position to comment further. President Lula, who received Iranian President Ahmadinejad in November, is tentatively scheduled to visit Iran during the first half of 2010.

¶14. (C) Comment: Neither past statements in support of the UPR nor the favorable response by Itamaraty to this demarche should be seen as presaging hard-hitting criticism of Iran, even if Brazil is almost certain to raise the Baha'i issue. There is nothing to suggest that Brazil will move very far off its careful "neutral" posture vis-C -vis Iran, which the GOI claims is necessary as it builds rapport with the GOI that will advance Brazil's policy of continued and intensified engagement with Iran on human rights and non-proliferation issues. End comment.

KUBISKE